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SUBJECT: SLM SEEKS TO BE PART OF SOLUTION TO DARFUR, MINAWI
TELLS S/E NATSIOS

REF: KHARTOUM 01540

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Summary

1, (SBU) In contrast to intransigent rebel leader Abdulwahid al Nur, the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) seeks to be part of the solution to the Darfur conflict, SLM leader Minni Minawi told S/E Natsios on October 4. While predicting that the UN/AU-sponsored talks in Libya would be a starting point rather than the stage for final talks with the DPA non-signatories, Minawi pledged the SLM's participation. However, the SLM called on the UN/AU to define its objectives for the Libya negotiations. Noting that the concerns of the DPA non-signatories--compensation, disarmament of the Arab militias, and the return of IDPs--were already included in the agreement, Minawi emphasized that the problem was not the DPA but its implementation. A prominent SLM field commander requested non-military logistical support and medical treatment for SLM members who had been wounded in the conflict to "rescue the agreement." S/E Natsios called for an inclusive peace process, underscoring that the DPA was the basis for the negotiations and that a new agreement was "unacceptable." End summary.

SLM: Part of the Solution

2. (SBU) Compensation, the disarmament of the Arab militias, and the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) are not the exclusive concern of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) non-signatory factions, Senior Assistant to the President and SLM leader Minni Minawi told S/E Natsios on October 4. The SLM shares these priorities--all of which are already included in the agreement--and viewed DPA implementation supported by the international community as the vehicle for addressing them. "We want to be part of the solution," he said, comparing his movement to the rebel faction led by Abdulwahid al Nur. "He should be part of the solution too."

Abdulwahid's Propaganda

¶3. (SBU) Instead, Abdulwahid's propaganda promised the IDPs 10,000 dollars per person in compensation and a Western style villa until but only if they remained in the camps until the Sudanese Government agreed to these demands, according to Transitional Darfur Regional Authority (TDRA) Secretary General Mohammed Suleiman. Minawi confidant Ali Traio noted that Abdulwahid's intransigence and the additional delays in the Fur's return from the camps gave pro-Khartoum Arab tribes additional time to settle land they had occupied, making it more difficult to return as part of a peace settlement.

Libya: Starting Point Not Final Stage

¶4. (SBU) The UN/AU-sponsored negotiations set to begin in Libya on October 27 are a mechanism for bringing the non-signatories into the peace process--a starting point rather than the stage for final status talks, predicted Minawi. If the talks did not undermine the DPA and if they included the "bulk" of the rebel movements, they could lay a foundation for jump-starting the political process. Regional problems should also be addressed, particularly as Chad and Sudan continued to support rebel movements across each other's borders. Minawi pledged that the SLM will attend the Libya talks, although he was not sure in what capacity.

UN/AU Should Define Objectives

¶5. (SBU) While the SLM supports any effort to make the DPA more comprehensive, the UN and AU have to define their objectives for the Libya negotiations, explained SLM power-broker Mohammed Tijani. He criticized the UN and AU for attempts to bring the non-signatories into the DPA

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without consultation with the SLM and identified three weaknesses in the UN and AU's approach: 1) The absence of a strategy for the talks based on an assessment of the lessons learned from the Abuja negotiations, 2) The lack of criteria for determining which groups should participate in the negotiations, and 3) The tendency of the international community to "tribalize" the problems of Darfur, when movements such as the SLM represented a broad set of tribal groups.

Field Commanders Essential

¶6. (SBU) Minawi added that the UN and AU has focused on a select group of non-signatories, neglecting the field commanders who control the security situation. "If they're excluded, it will be a big problem," he said. He noted that Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) commander Abdullah Banda, who split with JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim in recent months, is forging an alliance with the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Unity faction led by Abdullah Yehia, a union that will be a critical element for inclusion in the peace process. Minawi inferred that elements of SLA/Unity and JEM had perpetrated the September 29 attack on the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) group site near Haskanita, South Darfur. He reminded S/E Natsios that he had sent a letter to AMIS and the UN several months ago indicating that the area (then controlled by Minawi) had been over-run by DPA non-signatory groups which could threaten AMIS. Minawi said he had never received a response.

Delays in International Support

¶7. (SBU) A prominent field commander told S/E Natsios that the SLM had signed the DPA under "serious pressure" from the international community, which had promised support for the movement. While acknowledging that the international community moved slowly, he said, "by this time, I would have thought there would be some support for DPA implementation." Of particular concern were the SLM members who had been wounded during the conflict and had not yet received proper medical care: 200 in Khartoum, 150 in El Fasher, 150 in Nyala, 150 in El Geneina, and "thousands in the field." Before signing the DPA, the SLM had obtained logistics and support from raids on Government forces, according to the commander. Despite DPA provisions of support for the signatories, however, "nothing was coming."

New Agreement "Unacceptable"

¶8. (SBU) S/E Natsios called any talk of a new agreement "unacceptable." Thirty countries had endorsed the DPA as the basis for the peace settlement, a position codified in the Addis Ababa agreement of November 2006, the Tripoli Consensus of April 2007, and UN Security Council Resolution 1769. "We never agreed to a new, comprehensive agreement," said S/E Natsios.

¶9. (SBU) Describing his recent trip to Zalingei, West Darfur, S/E Natsios reported that Fur IDP leaders had presented their pre-conditions for attending peace negotiations (reftel). He had explained that the full deployment of the UN-AU Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) would take several months, during which time the peace process should not stagnate. The political process is the mechanism for addressing the non-signatories' concerns, and the Fur would miss the opportunity to participate in the 2009 elections if they remained in the IDP camps. He said that it was important to balance the need for inclusive dialogue with the practicalities of selecting a manageable group of representatives to "make a deal." The Arab tribes, including those who had perpetrated some of the violence, would also need to be part of an agreement or "the whole process will collapse."

Comment

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¶10. (SBU) The frustrations that Minawi and his forces feel with marginalization and lack of support (especially with the wounded or illiterate former fighters) will only be magnified by any future peace accord, which will add thousands more angry young men and their families looking for help. SLM/Minawi's cloudy fate is an object lesson to future signatories of any new and amended DPA. End comment.

¶11. (U) S/E Natsios did not have the opportunity to clear this message before departure.

¶12. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
FERNANDEZ